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TAGS: PINR PREL ASEC BO CU
SUBJECT: NEW CUBAN AMBO TO BOLIVIA: RAFAEL DAUSA

Classified By: COM Michael E. Parmly; Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) The Cuban regime has nominated senior Foreign Ministry honcho Rafael Dausa Cespedes as its ambassador to Bolivia. This in the context of greatly improved relations between Cuba and Bolivia in the wake of Evo Morales' election. Dausa can be expected to intensify Cuba's assault on Bolivia's democratic institutions, and to egg on Morales' anti-American tendencies. Dausa is a consummate professional, and unassailable on Cuban revolutionary mythology or relations with the United States. Biographical information follows below.

¶2. (SBU) Resume and Family life: Born in Havana on 11 April 1959. Father was a lawyer; died in 1975. Mother was a school teacher; she died in 1995. In an interview while serving at the UN, Dausa described his family as "a traditional Cuban family) very close. We spent much time together as part of my education and went through the changes of the revolution together."

-- Graduated from the Higher Institute of Foreign Relations in Havana (1976-1982);

-- Married to Mercedes De Armas Garcia. DOB: 16 Jan 1963;

-- Third secretary at CUBINT Washington: 1994-1995;

-- Deputy Director of Foreign Ministry (MINREX) US-Canada Division: 1996-1997;

-- Cuban Deputy Representative at the UN: 1998-2001;

-- Director of MINREX North American Division: 2001-2005;

(In 2002 and 2003, he headed the Cuban delegation for the Cuba-US Migration talks.)

-- Deputy Foreign Minister: 2005

¶3. (C) Observations from former USG Officials who met with Dausa:

A) Former WHA/CCA Director:

"From meetings at Migration Talks, I found him extremely persistent but dispassionate in his approach; he's all business. His wife is also in MINREX. One of my deputies in CCA knew her from the UN and found her the same -- tough but dispassionate. Dausa's Spanish is the clearest I've ever heard from a Cuban, really a pleasure to listen to. His English is excellent."

"You can work with him, but don't expect a friendly relationship, no joking around, no knowing winks about their

nutty policies. All business all the time. Example: We had a list of folks the regime had denied exit permits to, at the Migration Talks. I just happened to notice a Dausa (not a common name) on the list, and half-jokingly said it must be one of his relatives. He cut me cold: "No relative of mine wants to leave Cuba for this place. We all love the revolution." But at the same time, if there's something that's in both parties' interests, you can convince him of that. He was the North America director during the 2003 hijackings when we got them to take responsibility for a hijacked ferry."

"He served at the UN as their deputy permrep in the late 1990s/early 2000s; we demarshaled the Cubans to complain about inappropriate activities with US groups at that time, but did not seek to bounce him. He left the UN and became their director for North America, and now he's a vice minister for Latin America."

"I think he's quite tall; 6'2" if not 6'3". Balding, moustache."

B) Former USINT and INR Officer:

"He struck me as highly intelligent and highly motivated. You got the sense that he fully believed Cuba was in a life-and-death struggle with the USG. He was doctrinaire, but he did have traces of a dry sense of humor. He had presence and subordinates clearly deferred to him. We heard from a couple of sources that Dausa was a devoted family type. It's easy to see him as a committed nationalist, but it's hard to see how someone as smart and skilled as Dausa could fully buy in to Fidel's vision for Cuba. He's a big guy and seemed to keep in good shape."

C) Former USINT Chief of Mission:

"He's very smart and polished. Perfect English. I always thought he would have been an IBM executive type under another system. He has a sense of humor and can be very cordial and respectful when he wants to. However, when he has a hard message to deliver, he puts considerable passion into the demarche. He will never admit that the revolution has any flaws. If you stay away from direct criticism of the regime, you can deal with him on issues like child pornography, 3rd country alien smuggling, border issues. He's all business, all the time. He has a boy, if I recall, who likes baseball. He works long hours, every day, and appears to be very organized and thorough in his approach. He gets to business right away in meetings, with everything he has to say in dipnotes, which he will read completely for effect (and the microphones that are probably in the room at MinRex)."

"He'd often call me at midnight to come get some demarche or other and frequently had me in on weekends to get a complaint. I think he is a Colonel in Intelligence rather than a MinRex type. I think he is honest and relatively poor. Drives an old car. No signs of ostentation. He is totally committed to the Revolution. No use trying to change his mind. He knows the U.S. very well. He did a very good job schmoozing with U.S. visitors, blaming all problems on the U.S. and appearing to most interlocutors as reasonable and informed."

PARMLY